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Mortimer Merry; or, THE PRANKS OF A BOY MESMERIST.

By TOM TEASER.

PART I.

Part II is also in this book.



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MORTIMER MERRY

OR,

The Pranks of a Boy Mesmerist.

A STORY FULL OF FUN AND SCIENCE.

By TOM TEASER,

Author of "Muldoon's Grocery Store," Muldoon's Brother Dan," etc., etc., etc.

PART I.

MORT MERRY was as jolly a young fellow as they make.

He was up to everything, into everything and chock full of fun.

There wasn't a minute that he wasn't up to mischief or plotting it.

It was said that he lay awake thinking of pranks to play on someone.

It is my opinion that he used to dream out rackets to play on his victims.

He was a born practical joker and was always getting off tricks on one or another fellow.

He lived in a country town forty or fifty miles from New York, which he frequently visited.

On one occasion he saw a mesmerist do some remarkable tricks.

That gave him an idea.

At first he thought the whole thing was a fake.

The more he thought of it, however, the more he was convinced that it was not.

During the evening the professor called him up.

He tried his best to mesmerize or hypnotize or psychologize or Trilbyize or whatever else you call it, the young fellow.

He just couldn't.

"The young man is not a subject," he explained. "I can't do anything with him."

That set Mort to thinking.

Perhaps he could mesmerize other people if he could not be mesmerized himself.

The next day he called on the professor.

The latter, after a long interview, told him that he undoubtedly possessed mesmeric powers.

"All you need is developing," the professor said, "to make you as good as I am."

That wasn't enough for Mort.

He wanted to be better.

It would be a great thing if he could make people do as he liked.

He saw the great possibilities in the thing.

There would be no end of fun in it for him.

He paid the professor ten dollars for particulars and went home.

Then he got to work.

It isn't necessary to say how, for there are several ways of doing the thing.

It can't be done on everybody, either, as Mort soon discovered.

At last, however, he was sure that he could do something at it.

He resolved to begin on an easy subject just to get his hand in.

Going along the street, he met a dude with whom he was acquainted.

As it happened, there was no one else about.

The dude carried a little stick in his hand.

Mort caught his eye, looked straight at him, and said:

"Why do you carry such a heavy stick?"

"Why, me deah fellah, it isn't heavy at all, don't you—"

"Why, it's as heavy as iron," and Mort made a few quick passes.

"Why, bai Jaove, I never noticed it before, but it's—"

A sudden snap of the fingers, and a firm look.

"It's like a crowbar, I tell you."

The dude suddenly bent over to one side.

"Bai Jaove, I believe yaw right. What's the matter with it?"

"Why, it's a regular lamp post of weight."

The dude bent over still more.

"Aoh, bai Jaove, I cawn't lift it, don't you know."

Snap!

"Look out! That thing'll go off!"

"What says?"

"That rocket'll go off, I tell you. Look out! Chuck it away!"

Now the dude thought he had a fizzing sky rocket in his hand.

"Aoh, bai Jaove, do you think so?"

"Chuck it away, you fool. It'll explode in a minute."

The dude threw the cane in the air.

Mort made some more passes.

"Looks pretty, don't it? See all those red and green stars?"

The dude looked up.

"Aoh, bai Jaove, that's deuced pretty, don't you know."

"And now there's a balloon floating in the air. Isn't it fine?"

"Bai Jaove, that's deuced pretty."

"It's the Fourth of July, you know, and they're celebrating it."

"Aoh, yas, so it is."

"Hurrah!"

"Hurrah for the Fawth of July!"

"Ah, there it is, it's fallen right at your feet. Pick it up."

The stick had fallen not far away.

"Pick up your cane, Cholley. Don't you see it? Pick it up."

"Oh, yas, to be shaw. I must have dropped it, don't you know."

The dude stooped down to pick up his stick.

"Look out, that snake will bite you!"

Don't you see his rattles? Run, you fool!"

"Aoh, faw mawcy sakes!"

"Run, you fool! He's going to spring. That dude let out a yell and started. He went at a regular record breakin' pace.

Mort had to laugh to see him going it.

"All right!" he said sharply. "right! Come back here!"

Cholley suddenly stopped short.

Then he came back and picked up stick.

He was now himself again.

"Aw, how do?" he said. "Folks well?"

"Yes, thanks."

"Sistah well?"

"First class."

"Aw, so glad. Ta-ta, me deah boy, you latah."

Then he went off, with his arms st out as if he had a couple of big bunc under them.

Mort softly chuckled.

"That's immense," he mused. "Che doesn't recollect a thing about it."

He was quite right.

The dude didn't remember anything t had taken place.

It might just as well not have h pened.

The experiment was a decided succe The dude was a first rate subject.

Mort felt that he could do anything liked with him.

There were others, doubtless.

The thing to do was to find them.

"Well, I've got one, and I'll have with him," chuckled the boy mesmer "but I must get more, so as to mak more interesting."

It was not long after this that he Denny Murphy.

Denny was an Irishman.

He worked around the house, and odd jobs for Judge Holdover.

The judge was one of the principal zens of the place.

He was very dignified, very strict, had a high opinion of himself.

Denny had a pail of water in his ha He had just come from the pump in

"Hallo, Denny Murphy, what have got there?"

"It's a pail av wather I hov."

Mort looked him straight in the eye Then he made one or two passes his hand.

"What did you say it was?"

"Troth I donnō."

"It's hard cider you have."

"Is it now?"

Snap!

"Yes, it is hard cider. Why don't you take some?"

"Faix, I think I will."

"Take a long drink, Denny. It's good for you."

Up went the pail to Denny's lips.

Down his throat went nearly a quart of pump water.

"Look out, Denny, or you'll get drunk!"

"Phwat's that, sor?"

"Why you're drunk now, you can scarcely stand now, in fact."

That was true enough.

Denny was wabbling about from side to side like a ship without any rudder.

"Why, Denny Murphy, you're awfully drunk."

"So I am, sor. Wor it the cidher med me dhrunk?"

"Cider? Why, don't you know it was whisky you drank?"

"Oh glory, was it? Sure I must have another sup."

"You'll get drunker if you do."

"Faix I don't care. A little more won't make any differ."

Up went the pail.

This time the water did not go down Denny's throat.

It slopped over his shirt instead.

Some of it went inside.

"Oh, Denny Murphy! Why you're just paralyzed!"

Thump!

Splash!

Down went the pail.

Away ran the water.

Denny braced himself against the fence.

He certainly looked maudlin enough to have been on a long spree.

He thought he was on one now.

That was because Mort told him he was.

It was mesmerism that did that.

Mort had got the idea in his head, and so he had all the symptoms.

He was regularly Trilbyized for the time being.

He had no more control of himself than a baby.

He simply had to do what Mort told him to do.

As Mort stood looking at him, along came the judge.

He appeared upon the scene before Mort was aware.

Denny's hapless condition attracted his attention at once.

"My word!" he ejaculated. "Dennis, what does this mean? How dare you get drunk on my premises?"

The young mesmerist doubted his ability to hoodoo the judge.

He was afraid he hadn't had practice enough.

It might be possible, but he wasn't certain of it.

Otherwise he would have made the judge believe that Denny was the minister and perfectly sober.

"What do you say?" demanded the judge. "Why don't you answer my question?"

"All right!" said Mort.

Snap!

Denny suddenly came to himself.

"Good-day, yer annor," he said, touching his hat.

"What do you mean, Dennis, by getting drunk in this—"

"Me, is ut? Sure, I'm not dhrunk. Oh, glory, how'd I shpil all the wather?"

"Not drunk?" sputtered the judge. "My word, sir, how can—"

"No, sor, that's what I said," and Denny picked up the pail.

"Well, of all things! Why, I saw you, not five minutes ago, so full that you couldn't stand up."

"Oh, glory, yer annor, I didn't think yez'd talk like that! Sure, I hovn't had a dhrop the day. I'm as sober as yerself this blissed minyute. Ax Masther Mortimer av I aren't."

Then he began to pump away for dear life.

He didn't remember the first word of what had happened when Mort had him under the spell.

Judge Holdover could not tell what to make of it.

He certainly had seen Denny in a most inebriated condition.

IMER

Now, however, he was as sober as any one need be.

Could a man become sober so soon as that?"

It did not seem possible.

"My word l!" muttered the judge.

Then he went into the house.

The thing was beyond him.

Therefore he did not care to stay and discuss it.

Mort did not try any more experiments on Denny just then.

He had ascertained that he was a good subject and that was all he wanted.

"That's two," he remarked. "I'll bet I can fix the judge too, some day, when I get more in the way of this thing. Won't there be fun when I do, though?"

Having found out that he could mesmerize people, Mort just went to work to do better, so that he might hoodoo almost anybody.

This isn't the place for any scientific discussion, so I'll just say that there is such a thing as transferring thought to another fellow, and making him think what you think without any passes or that sort of thing.

This is a higher sort of mesmerism, and Mort Merry intended to practice it in time. Then there are other forms, but it will be time enough to speak about those later on.

Three or four days after his first experiments, Mort chanced to go into the kitchen of his house where Rosanna Appletart, the cook of the establishment, was at work.

Rosie was a big, fat, two hundred pound colored lady, down on white folks, and with a very large opinion of her own worth and respectability.

She didn't like to have anyone come into her kitchen, not even the lady of the house, resenting it as an impudent intrusion.

When Mort appeared, therefore, she was ready to get right up on her ear in a second.

"G'way fom yer," she sputtered. "Wha' business yo' got comin' in mah kitchen? Don' low men folks in yer 'tall. Don' yo' know dat? Yo' jus' clar out o' yer or I takes a rollin'-pin to yo'!"

"What's clouding you, Rosie?" asked Mort. "Don't you see your colored friend, Deacon Shinbone, at the door?"

"Wha' dat yo' say? Ain' no col'd pusson yere 'tall. Wha'yo' tryin'—"

"Why, Rosie, you're away off. Don't you see him? Are you blind? Look again."

Snap!

A little hocos pocus with the hands. Then Rosie looked toward the door.

There was a broom standing near it.

"Why don't you say 'howdy' to the deacon, Rosie? Where's your manners?"

Then Rosie's face suddenly became all smiles.

"Why, fo' goodness' sakes, dekin, when did yo' come in? 'Clar to de lam' I didn't see yo' befo'. How's yo' wife an' de chilen? 'Pears ter me yo'm lookin' mighty fine dese days. Won'yo' sot by fo' a minnit?"

Mort was telling Rosie to do all this by just thinking it.

She got out a chair, set it in the middle of the floor, and took another for herself.

"Lor' bless yo', Dekin, I se jus' glad ter see yo', 'deed I is! Dey don' none ob de bredren an' sistahs come yer ter see me, 'cos I se a cook, jus' sif a cook wasn' as good as a wash woman any day. Lan' sakes, I jus' lak ter talk to yo' all de time."

"Why don't you take Mrs. Shinbone's baby and put it to sleep, Rosie? Don't you see it's crying?"

"Lan' sakes, I neber tort o' dat!" cried the fat cook, jumping up.

Then she grabbed the broom and sat down again with it in her arms.

"Dere, dere, don' yo' cry, honey! Dere, dere, go sleepins, lak a good baby. Hush, yo' hush, hon', an' go raght to sleep!"

Then she rocked back and forth, crooning and patting the supposed kid with her big fat hand.

Anybody in the hall who could hear and not see would have sworn that Rosie was rocking a kid to sleep.

"Hush-a-bye, honey, hush-a-bye," crooned Rosie, while Mort looked on and grinned.

He was so taken up with watching the

coon that he forgot all about turning the switch.

All at once, and totally unexpected, in walked Mrs. Merry.

The boy mesmerist scooted.

"Rosie," said the lady, "I think we had better have—"

Then she stopped and stared open-mouthed at the cook.

Rosie went right on with her rocking and crooning as though there hadn't been anyone within forty miles.

"Why, my good gracious, what in the name of goodness—"

"Dere, dere, honey, yo' go raght to sleep an' don'—"

Mrs. Merry was simply bowled over with astonishment.

She didn't know what to make of the cook.

"Why, for gracious sakes, Rosie, what are you doing there with that broom just as—"

"Don'te cry, hon', mammy's got yo', don' yo' cry," said Rosie.

She didn't seem to see or hear her mistress.

The spell was still on her, and until Mort took it off she would go on rocking and singing to that imaginary kid.

Mort had skipped out too quick to wake her up.

Perhaps he did it on purpose. I never asked him.

"Goodness, gracious, is the woman crazy?" snorted the lady.

Rosie paid her no attention.

Then she went over to the cook and gave her a shake.

"Rosie, Rosanna Appletart, what's the matter with you?"

"Sh, sh, dere, dere, go to sleep, honey; don' yo' min' em. Sh—sh!"

Another shake, and a good one.

"Are you crazy, or are you just doing this for a joke?"

A woman of Mrs. Merry's build could not shake the cook very hard.

You would not have known that she had shaken her at all from Rosie's actions.

She went right on as before.

"Dear, dear, the woman must be stark, staring crazy, there's no other way to account for it."

Another shake!

It didn't do a bit of good.

"And all this work to be done! Dear, dear, it's enough to try the patience of Job."

Nothing disturbed the cook, who seemed as happy as a clam.

Mrs. Merry got tir at last, and went off to find her husband, or Mort, or somebody to send for a doctor.

The minute the coast was clear in slipped Mort.

"Well, that was a snap and no mistake. By Jinks! if she isn't at it yet."

She was likely to be at it till the cows came home if he didn't remove the hoodoo.

"Hi-hi, Rosie, all right, all right, wake up!" he shouted, taking the broom out of the cook's hands.

Rosie gave a snort, sat bolt upright, looked around her in a puzzled sort of way and jumped to her feet.

Mort skipped out in short order.

"Wull, fo' de lan's sake, ef I ain' done been asleep, an' all dis wo'k gotter be done! H'm, clar ter goodness, ef missus knew dat she done make a big fuss."

Then she got at her work in earnest.

Presently Mrs. Merry came in again.

She had not been able to find anybody.

Greatly to her surprise she saw Rosie working away for all she was worth.

"Well, of all things!" she declared.

"Wha' dat, Mis' Merry?"

"So you've gone to work again, have you?"

"M-m!"

"What did you want to behave that way for when I was in here, just now?"

"Was yo' in yer jus' now, Mis' Merry?"

"Of course I was. Didn't you see me?"

"Didin' saw nuffin'. Spect dat was de time when I was asleep."

"Asleep!" repeated the lady.

"Dat's what I sayed, misses. Cyan't account fo' mah goin' ter sleep lak dat, wif all dis wo'k to be did."

"You were not asleep! What makes you tell such stories?" demanded Mrs. Merry, indignantly.

"Spects I was, missis, dead asleep. Leastwise I woke up sudden jus' now an' foun' m'se'f in de chair in de middle ob de flo'. Reckon yo' call dat sleepin', don' yo'?" "Whoever heard of a person being asleep with their eyes open?"

"Donno nuffin' 'bout dat, missy, I didn' see mahse'f an' I couldn't tol' yo' ef I hed mah eyes open or no."

"It's all nonsense, you were not asleep, you were just trying to fool me, make me think you were crazy, singing to that broomstick and pretending it was a baby. I don't see what you want to do such things for, when you know—"

Rosie was astonished now.

street, near the store, by the along came Rosie.

She had a big basket in her hands, and she was going to the store to make purchases for the house.

She had on a bonnet with roses all over it and a big striped shawl.

Her dress was spotted, and she looked just too giddy for anything.

At the same time along came Cholly Smith from the opposite direction.

He wore a white suit, a big straw hat, a wide sash, a fancy scarf, and a glass in his eye.

He looked stunning enough to go on exhibition, and he felt as proud as a peacock.

"Leggo me, I tell yo'! I smash you' jaw ef yo' don'!"

"Yaw sweet as sugah, bai Jaoove."

"Stop you' foolishness, I tol' yo'. How dar' yo' put you' han's on a 'spectable col'd lady?"

Cholley kept up the hugging act.

That fat wench couldn't move to save her life.

She could talk all the same.

"Took you' han's off me, I tol' yo'! Yo's got de bigges' cheek eber I see!"

"Yum-yum, my pwecious."

"Stop o' dat, I tol' yo'!"

Rosie was tearing mad.

"Neber see de beat ob you' impotence!

I'se a 'spectable col'd lady, I tol' yo'."



"HE WAS CLEAN MESMERIZED AT THAT INSTANT. "THERE'S YOUR SWEETHEART, MY BOY. WHY DON'T YOU EMBRACE HER?" NO SOONER SAID THAN DONE. ROSIE SAW THE DUDE COMING, BUT SHE HAD NO IDEA WHAT HE WAS GOING TO DO. UP HE RUSHED AND THREW HIS ARMS TIGHT AROUND HER. THEN MORT GOT IN HIS FINE WORK."

"Wha' yo' say? Yo' see me sittin' dere rockin' a broomstick ter sleep?"

"Yes, I did, and your eyes were wide open. I don't see why you want to cut such capers, when there's so much to be done and—"

"Clar ter goodness, missis, I neber done nuffin' ob de so't!"

"Why, Rosie, how can you stand there and tell me such—"

"I tol' yo' I neber did, I jus' wen' ter sleep, but I neber done no rockin' nor singin' nor nuffin', wisht I m' die ef I did."

"But I tell you I saw—"

"Den I was asleep, missis, an'—"

"You were not asleep, you had your eyes wide open. It was just a trick—"

"Tol' yo' I neber did!" snorted the cook, and Mrs. Merry went away not knowing whether to put Rosie down as a sleep-walker or a monumental liar.

It happened that not long after this Mort was down in the village on the main

The minute that young Merry got his eye he was gone.

Snap!

Mort had him dead in a jiffy.

He was clean mesmerized at that instant.

"There's your sweetheart, my boy. Why don't you embrace her?"

No sooner said than done.

Rosie saw the dude coming, but she had no idea what he was going to do.

Up he rushed and threw his arms tight around her.

Then Mort got in his fine work.

"Bai Jaoove, yaw an angel, don't you know?"

Cholley hugged just like a bear. Rosie simply couldn't move.

She dropped her basket.

And looked indignant.

Then she sputtered:

"Wha' yo' doin', yo' sassy white fellah?" Cholley hugged all the harder.

A crowd had gathered, of course. They were all taking in the show.

Solid citizens, hayseeders, grocers' boys and strollers were all there.

Men, women and kids joined the crowd.

A coon or two, a Chinaman with a basket of washing and an Irishman swelled the assembly.

All hands were on the broad grin.

"Aoh, but yaw so sweet!"

Then there was a howl.

"Yaw the sweetest thing on awth!"

At that there was a yell.

Rosie was getting madder and more indignant every second.

"Drat you' nasty white skin, leggo me."

The crowd laughed.

"Stop o' dat I tol' yo', ef yo' don' wan'

you' haid broke."

More merriment on the part of the multitude.

"Wha' yo' means by 'sultin' a 'spectable lady lak dat?"

More grins and giggles.

"Jus' yo' lemme get hol' ob yo' fo' a minute! I show yo' wha' I do!"
Mort kept Cholley right at it.
He had that dude completely under a spell.

Cholly just couldn't help himself.
The best of it was that he didn't know a thing about it.
Rosie was sputtering like a leaky kettle on a hot stove.
She was mad clean through, but it didn't do her a bit of good.
"Drat you' impudence! Jus' yo' lemme git mah han's loose a minute!"
Then Mort concluded to turn off the current, as it were.
There would be fun and no mistake.

"Aoh, bai jaove!"
"Give him a regular bear hug, Rosie!"
Mort could give directions without any one tumbling.
All hands knew him for a practical joker.
Consequently, what he said caused no surprise.
"Hug him tight, Rosie; he's your honey boy!"
Rosie did hug him tight.
Poor Cholley couldn't move.
His arms were just glued to his sides.
"Kiss him for his mother, Rosie!"
The cook obeyed.
It raised a laugh.
"Aoh, you stop!"
"Oh, by gosh, jest looker that!"

The crowd thought she was paying off the dude for hugging her.
They thought he had done it for a joke.
Now they thought Rosie had the best of it.
They giggled and guffawed and shook their sides and roared.
"Give him another kiss, Rosie."
That fat cook just slobbered all over the poor dude.
"Oh, you spring lamb, I jus' do lub you!"
"Aoh, you nahsty thing, go awahy."
"Hug him tight, Rosie."
"Aoh!" yelled Cholley, "you'll break me cawssets, don't you know?"
"Break away!" cried Mort, snapping his fingers.



IN A TWINKLING, BEFORE CHOLLEY COULD ESCAPE, THE FAT WENCH HAD HER ARMS AROUND HIM. "AOH, BAI JAOVE!" "GIVE HIM A REGULAR BEAR HUG, ROSIE!" MORT COULD GIVE DIRECTIONS WITHOUT ANY ONE TUMBLING. ALL HANDS KNEW HIM FOR A PRACTICAL JOKER. CONSEQUENTLY, WHAT HE SAID CAUSED NO SURPRISE. "HUG HIM TIGHT, ROSIE; HE'S YOUR HONEY BOY!"

PART II.

"ALL right, Cholley!" said Mort.
The dude came out of his trance.
He let go of Rosie and stared at her in surprise.

"Beg pahdon!" he said, seeing her glaring at him.

Rosie had made up her mind to give that dude one licking that he would remember.

Mort had other things in view.

He thought the crowd wanted a change of scene.

That's what he meant to give them.

In a jiffy he had jumped to the other side.

He caught Rosie's eye in the very nick. Then he set his will machine at work.

"Give him one good hug for his mother, Rosie," he said.

"Enough said!"

In a twinkling, before Cholley could escape, the fat wench had her arms around him.

"By durn, but that's rich!"
"H'm! never laffed so much in all my life!"

"Waal, that takes the bun!"
"Aoh, you howid cwechah, let go! I'll tell my ma!"

"Don't you mind it, Cholley. It's only tit for tat."

"Give him another rouser, Rosie!"

Smack!

The cook's beefsteak lips were glued to Cholley's, and then withdrawn with a sound like a cow pulling her foot out of a bog hole.

"Yum—yum! yo's mah honey boy, yo' is! Kiss you' mudder, precious!"

How the crowd did laugh.

Cholley was disgusted.

"Aoh, you just stop!"

Mort kept up the pressure and Rosie couldn't help herself.

She hadn't the least notion of what she was doing.

The spell was lifted.
Rosie released the dude and took a long breath.

Cholley had to do the same.
Rosie's memory went back to the moment when Cholly had let go of her.

All the rest was as if it had not happened.

Rosie thought that she had just recovered the use of her limbs.

"Yo' sassy white trash, I'll show yo' how to insult a 'spectable col'd lady aftah dis!"

Whack!

One big hand smote Cholley on the side of the jaw.

"Take dat, yo' low down dood!"

Biff!

Then he got a crack on the other cheek. He was done on both sides, so to speak. Then Rosie lowered her head and took him in the pit of the stomach.

Cholley went to grass in a jiffy. That didn't satisfy Rosie, however.

MORTIMER MERRY.

She grabbed up her basket and banged the dude over the head with it.

"Dere yo' or'nary critter, don' yo' go fo' ter took no liberties wif me no mo', ef yo' don' wan' yo' haid broke!"

Then away went Rosie to the store, glaring at the crowd and no one dared to laugh. The dude got up looking very much ashamed.

"The idea of that howid niggah woman putting her awms awounded me!" he gasped. "It was pawfectly disgusting, don't you know!"

"Wall, she was only hugging you back," said some one.

"Only hugging me back? Bah Jaoove, she hugged me all ovah, don't you know."

"Wall, that's because you hugged her."

"I hugged her! The ideah!"

"Twasn't so funny when she paid you off in yure own coin, was it?"

"I hug a niggah woman? Nevah!"

"That's tew thin! We seen yu dew it!"

"Aoh, you howid stowy tellah! I nevah did such a thing, nevah!"

"Wall, yu're ababout the biggest liar in these yer parts, I reckon, ef yu c'n stan' there an' say that tu aour faces, what seen yu done it, b'gosh!"

"The ideah!" said Cholley, walking away.

It was bad enough to be hugged by a big fat wench on a hot day, without being accused of having reciprocated the little attention.

Cholley was really honest in his statements.

He had no recollection of having hugged Rosie.

Neither did Rosie know that she had embraced the dude.

That was the funny part of the mesmeric science as practiced by Mort.

He could make a person believe things that had never happened if he chose.

In fact, there were several things that he could do with a little practice.

"This isn't going to be a dull summer," he chuckled. "I don't think I need to go to the mountains or seashore for recreation. I can have all the fun I want right here at home."

It wasn't long after that before Mort was down on the village street, when he saw the tough citizen of the town approaching in one direction and Judge Holdover in another.

Now the judge was very dignified, and was glad of it.

He would not associate with everybody in town by any means.

You would find him talking with the parson, one cr two of the deacons, the president of the bank, and one or two of the richest citizens, and that was all.

He might nod to a few others, but to all the rest he was very stiff and proud.

When he passed them on the street you would imagine that he did not see them, his look was so far away.

Mr. Plug Cutt, who now approached, was one of the men that he ignored entirely.

His name was Cutt and he was such a tough gentleman, such a sporty boy, in fact, that the name Plug fitted him to a nicety.

He was known all over the town as Plug Cutt and he did not resent the name in the least.

On the contrary he rather gloried in it, as being something distinctive and out of the common run.

He chewed and smoked plug tobacco and always had a stick of it in his pocket, hence the further appropriateness of the appellation.

Mr. Plug Cutt wore a pink shirt with a white collar and cuffs, a big diamond, checked tops to his toothpick shoes, a tall white hat with a black band, a striped suit and a huge watch chain.

He was tough, and he knew it, and was glad of it.

Under ordinary circumstances he would have given the judge an impudent nod as he passed him by.

Under the same circumstances the judge would not seem to have seen him.

Just now, however, the circumstances were not ordinary.

Young Merry got his powers to work upon the judge as soon as he came up.

He fixed him with his cold gray eye, after

the fashion of the ancient mariner, and got him dead to rights in a jiffy.

Then he just fired thoughts into his head that the judge never imagined would go there.

In fact that pompous old citizen wasn't half as smart as he and other folks imagined.

He was a judge in that town, but he wouldn't have been a second-class lawyer anywhere else.

He was simply full of conceit, that was all, and an easy subject for the young mesmerist.

In fact, Mort was surprised to see how dead easy he was when he once got at him.

Having fixed the judge, Mort got at Plug Cutt.

Up came Holdover, all smiles.

"Why, Plug, old man, how are you? Glad to see you."

Mort had fixed Plug by this time.

"Don't know you!" said the sport.

"You ain't in my set, I don't play in your yard—see!"

"Ah, cheese it, Plug, old pal," said the judge, holding out his hand. "Don't be so up-and-up. Come off your perch."

One or two respectable citizens came along just then.

Mort got in more of his fine work.

"Come along, old man," said Holdover, slapping Cutt on the back. "You and me ought to be twins, we're so much alike."

Then Holdover hooked his arm into that of the sporty boy, paying no attention to the worthy citizens.

"Let go of me, you old jay, or I'll smash you—see?" remarked Plug, disdainfully.

The citizens were surprised.

One of them was the parson.

He couldn't understand how such a man as Cutt would dare to speak to Judge Holdover in that style.

"Oh, I say, don't be so exclusive, Plug," said Judge Holdover. "You and I frequently meet in court, you know."

"Don't be so gay, I tell you, or I'll push your face in! Do you get onto that?"

Plug looked awfully tough when he said that.

Then he smashed Holdover's hat down over his ears.

"Bully for you, Plug! That's my style! Come on; let's go on a hurrah."

There was more surprise for the good citizens.

Then Mort suddenly changed his tactics with Mr. Cutt.

"I'll go you!" remarked the latter quickly. "Come on! Let's paint the old town blue."

Then off went those two, arm in arm, like a pair of jolly sports.

Plug sang the "Kick-up-a-row Brigade" and Holdover joined in with "Her Golden Hair Was Hanging Down Her Back."

The combination was rather confusing.

All hands were just dumb with surprise.

They only found their voices when Plug and the judge entered the village tavern.

Then they all had something to say.

"Dear, dear, to think of the depravity of this world!"

"Wall! the jedge must have changed his principles quite some lately."

"Hah! next time he fines a man for gettin' drunk, I guess some one'll have suthin' tu say."

"Well — well, I never would have thought it."

A dozen persons saw the judge go into the tavern.

As many saw him enter, being in there at the time.

They were surprised to see him.

At first they thought he was after evidence.

There was no license in the town.

The tavern keeper had to sell beer and liquors under fancy names to get around the law.

Consequently, the appearance of the judge caused considerable consternation.

This was changed when Holdover walked up and said:

"Give us something all around. Come on up, boys."

At first the landlord hesitated.

That gave time for Mort's little plan to work.

The young mesmerist had not followed the judge.

He had put a time limit on him instead.

That is, he had fixed it so that at the end of a certain time, his cinch on the judge would slip off.

After that he would be himself once more.

Hypnotizers and mesmerists understand that sort of business.

It was not necessary for Mort to be present in order to release the judge from his spell.

He simply gave him three minutes in which to wake up, and put his own mind on it.

Plug was given a little longer time.

The landlord's hesitation came in at the right moment.

Holdover's time expired at that instant, and he looked around in surprise.

"How dare you," he sputtered, unhooking his arm from Plug's.

"Come on, old man; have one on me first. Drink hearty, judge, old sport!"

"Sir! How dare you address me in that manner? Swizzle, you are selling without a license again!"

"Oh, no, I ain't, your honor. I don't sell this, I give it away. The charge is for the cheese and crackers."

"No evasion, sir! I shall take steps to punish this palpable violation of the law, with the utmost rigor. It is a plain violation, identically the same as if you had committed an assault, sir!"

Just then Plug Cutt's time expired.

Plug was himself again in a jiffy.

He leered at His Honor, cocked his hat over his right ear, stuck a cigar in his mouth, and said:

"Well, I take me beans, if dis ain't de biggest show o' cheek I ever seen. What yer doin' in here, judge?"

Plug didn't have much respect for the judicial ermine as worn by Holdover.

The fact was he estimated the man at his proper value, and was not blinded by his bogus dignity as were half the folks in town.

"Sir!" said the judge. "How dare you address me in that familiar manner?"

"Den what yer want to come in here fur, judge?" asked Plug.

The judge regarded the question as decidedly pertinent and skipped out.

The landlord got after the tough citizen.

"What you want to steer his nibs in here for, Plug?" he asked. "Do you want to get me pulled?"

"What's that? Me steer his jiglets in here?"

"Yes, you did, you came in, arm in arm, the two of you, and the judge called for something all around."

"What!"

"That's straight."

Plug saw that it was, by the looks of all the men in the place.

"Great beeswax!" he said, with a comical look. "I must have been awful full to so far forget m'self as to take old Holdover's arm. Don't put it up agin me, felers."

The others laughed and Plug actually fancied that he had been clean hoodooed by rum when he had entered the place.

No one had any idea of the real state of the case.

Judge Holdover did not get off so lightly.

The parson met him as he came and expostulated with him on the enormity of his conduct.

Holdover was in arrears for pew rent and hence the dominie stood in less awe of him than usual.

"I am astonished, sir, to see that you would so far forget yourself as to enter a den of iniquity like this in the company of so notorious and unregenerate an individual as Cutt," began the dominie, in his regulation Friday night prayer meeting tone and style. "Are you not aware, sir, that you are directly responsible for the sins of your brother when you set such an example to—"

"But, my dear Brother Wiggins, allow me to point out a certain discrepancy between the actual, true facts in the case and your statements, not made under oath to be sure, but still apt to mislead the lay mind on this matter. Now, let me call your attention to the fact that I did not

enter this place in the company of Mr. Cutt, but merely found him there when

"But, judge, I have the evidence of my senses and this informs me that I saw you but just now enter this iniquitous precinct, arm in arm with a very disreputable person, and furthermore, I have auricular evidence that you invited him to go upon

"Really, dominie, for a person in your position, this is—"

"Now, now, judge, don't attempt to deny that—"

They were both talkers from wayback.

Both used a great many words without managing to say much.

The legal and the clerical styles are similar in that respect.

Each wanted the floor at the same time.

The result was that neither could hear what the other said.

Finally the deacon and the storekeeper came up.

"Brother Shouter, perhaps you can help me in this matter," said the parson.

"What's the matter, Brother Wiggins?"

"Well, the judge here actually denies having gone into the tav—"

"I do deny it, totally and entirely, emphatically and positively, yes, sir, I deny and repudiate your statements and declarations in that respect," blustered the judge. "That I went in is true, but I went alone and—"

At that moment Plug Cutt came out.

The parson determined to get at the truth of the matter, even if he had to address the unregenerate Plug.

"Ahem, Mr. Cutt," he said; "did I not see you and Judge Holdover enter this place a few minutes ago?"

"Reckon you must have, parson, if you was in the neighborhood," said Cutt, with a funny wink. "The boys all say the same thing, but I don't remember. Guess I must have been loaded or I'd 've been more particular."

Then the sporty boy sailed away, leaving the case in a worse muddle than before.

The parson was shocked, the judge was disgusted, and the other fellows were just tickled to death.

There was a coolness between the pulpit and the bench for a day or so after that.

Parson Wiggins thought that Judge Holdover was really in need of the prayers of the congregation, and the judge thought it a low down trick on the dominie's part to take the word of a tough citizen like Plug Cutt against his.

Mort had seen all the fun except what took place in the tavern, and had let things go right along naturally, considering that he could not improve upon them by any inference of his.

That same afternoon he was at the railroad station looking for snaps when along came Joe West, the fattest man in town.

There was a penny in the slot machine in front of the station, for trying your weight.

"Hallo, Joe West," said Mort, looking the fat man in the eye, "you're getting thin."

"Ah, go on, what are you talking about? I've gained ten pounds in a week."

Mort snapped his fingers.

"I tell you you're getting thin."

"By jinks, we'll try this here machine and see."

"Bet you don't weigh over a hundred pounds."

A few passes, a snap and a wink.

Joe got upon the platform of the scale and dropped in a cent.

The needle flew round as far as it would go.

If there had been fifty points more for it to go, it would have covered them.

"What did I tell you, Joe?"

"My sakes, what's the matter with me? Only a hundred pounds!"

Joe stared at the dial as if his eyes would pop out of his head.

He really imagined that the needle indicated only one hundred pounds.

He was thoroughly hoodooed.

"Gosh! I don't believe the thing registers right."

Just then along came Parson Wiggins, to take a train.

"I say, Mr. Wiggins, what does this thing say?"

Wiggins came up and looked at the dial.

Snap!

Judge Holdover came out of the waiting room at that moment.

"Why, the pointer is at one hundred

pounds, Joseph, but—"

Holdover snorted.

He saw where the dial was.

"And that's the man that as good as told me I lied!" said the judge.

PART III.

THE fat man got off the scales.

Snap!

"All right, Joe?"

Then he was in his own mind again.

Likewise the parson.

Neither of them remembered a thing about it.

The judge had not been hoodooed this time, however.

"Well, a man that will call two hundred and fifty one hundred pounds is not deserving of respect," he remarked.

The parson didn't know the man was talking about him.

Consequently he had nothing to say.

He did not think it worth while to agree with such a self-evident proposition as that.

The judge was down on the parson for the time, and ready to say anything.

However, the train came puffing and snorting along just then, and the matter had to be dropped.

The judge and the parson got on board but they sat at opposite ends of the car they entered.

Neither would have anything to do with such a liar as the other had shown himself to be.

There would have been some fun if Mort had been around, but he was not.

There were plenty other fellows that he could make fun with, however, and he proceeded to do it.

He had lots of mesmeric force left in him and he thought he'd try an easy one.

There was one solitary Chinaman in that town.

His name was Sam Bing.

That's what his sign said, anyhow.

He was a laundryman, of course.

He was short and waddled.

His voice was pitched in a high key and he had a sweet smile.

Also a pigtail and double decker shoes.

He hired half a shop and did a pretty good trade.

To him went young Merry after the train had started.

Bing spoke pretty fair English—for a Chinaman.

When Mort went in he was busy with a paint brush and a pot of marking ink, making up his accounts.

"What you want, lillie bloy?" he asked.

He wasn't fond of American boys as a rule.

He had had trouble with them more than once.

Generally they kept out of his place.

Several of them had been scalded and one or two had been burned with hot flat irons.

That kept the rest away unless business took them there.

"Hallo, Bing."

Snap—snap, whisk!

The Chinaman was nailed.

A fixed look and he was hoodooed completely.

Mort could do anything with him after that.

"Pretty snowy out, isn't it?"

"Yeppee, snow likee fun."

It was a hot day in July.

There was no snow in a thousand miles.

Fft—fft, snap! A wave of the hand.

"Get out that big piece of paper, Bing."

"Yeppee, me gettee."

"Now take your marking brush."

"Yeppee, dat velly nice blush."

"You're a nice fellow, ain't you, Bing?"

The Chinaman smiled.

That smile would have sickened a cat.

"Yep, me slink so, me bully bloy, glassee eye."

"You like to work, don't you?"

"Yeppee, me slink dat bully."

"You like to work for nothing, too, don't you?"

"Slertinly, me no care fo' money, me got heap."

"You'd just as lief work for nothing as not?"

"Yeppee, dat all light."

Bing was certainly not himself.

"Why don't you make out a sign letting people know it?"

"Yeppee, me do dat."

Then he began putting some cross-eyed characters in black on the card.

Snap!

"That won't do, Bing. Put it in United States, so somebody can read it."

Then Mort had to get in his fine work.

Chinamen are good imitators.

Let them see anything done once, and they can do it.

Mort simply drew letters in the air, keeping his eye fixed on Bing.

"Put that down, Bing."

"Yeppee, dat velly nice!"

Word by word the sign was made in big black letters.

When it was finished, it read as follows:

"WASHING done to-day for nothing.

Bring on your work. First come, first served. Free graft!"

SAM BING."

"Hang it up, Bing!"

"Yeppee, dat all light!"

"That'll catch 'em."

"You bettee, alleee same sugee catchee fly."

Then Bing hung up his sign.

It hung in the window, where everybody could see it.

Then Mort let go his hold on Sam Bing.

"All right. Go to work, you lazy Chinaman!"

Snap!

Bing was all right in a trice.

He yawned, stretched his arms, and looked around the shop.

Mort had skipped.

"Hi-ya, me velly sleepy, me no savvy, me no smokee."

Then he got to work.

It wasn't long before that sign in the window was noticed.

Plug Cutt saw it first.

"Gee whiz! that's a chance!" he muttered.

Then he hustled off as fast as he could to his lodgings.

Cholley Smith was the next to get onto Bing's notice.

Now Cholley liked to put on three or four, and sometimes six clean collars a day.

He couldn't do it always, as his wash-lady kicked.

He paid her so much a week for his washing, big or little.

If it was small she said nothing.

When it got large she said a lot.

Cholley had a stock of soiled linen on hand, which he did not dare to dump on the laundress all at once.

Here was a chance to have it done.

The way he made tracks for his seven by nine hall bedroom was a lesson for springers.

There were others who saw the sign.

One of these was Denny Murphy.

He hurried home and soon came back with a big bundle of stuff.

It contained overalls, shirts, jumpers, socks and under clothing.

Down on the counter he plunked the bundle.

"I say, Chinee, phwin can yez let me hov the washing?"

"Fliday night."

"All right, but don't forget that I brung it in the day."

Bing didn't catch on.

He started to make out a ticket.

Denny started for the door.

"Hi-hi, stoppee. Come takee tickee. You no have tickee, you no gettee washee, you savvy?"

"Oho, is that so?"

"Yeppee."

Denny picked up the ticket and looked at it.

"And phwat's that? A bit av music for a blind mon is it?"

"You keepee tickee, you gettee washee."

"All roight."
Just then in rushed the dude.
He plunked about thirty collars and ten pairs of cuffs on the counter.
"Heah, fellah, you can do these faw me wight awahy."
"All light, me do."
"Can I have them done to-night?"
"To-mollow."
"Oh, that'll do, don't you know, but rembah that I brought 'em in to-dahy, me boy."
"Yep, dat all light," and Bing gave Cholley a ticket.
Then in came Plug Cutt with a bundle.
He had four white shirts, three pink ones, a white vest, a pair of flannel breeches, sev-

Both wished him to remember the day they had brought in the stuff.
Then they went out.
More fellows followed.
Also two or three women.
These were modest creatures.
They had lace curtains to do up.
And Marseilles bed spreads.
And a dozen white skirts.
Not to mention things with lots of ruffles on them.
Give a woman a free racket and she'll work it for all it's worth.
That Chinaman was just swamped with work.
In half an hour he had more on hand

She had just seen that sign and wanted to take advantage of it.

"Say!" she snapped; "do you count in counterpanes and table cloths and sheets?"

"Me no gettee time washee anysing before me gette odee man to helpee. Me no takeee in somesling more to-day. You come to-mollow."

"Huh! I guess not! To-morrow you'll want to charge me for it."

"Yeppe, me charge, allee same my plice velly low."

"Well, I want 'em done for nothing if I can get 'em."

Two or three other persons had come in. They all had bundles.



PARSON WIGGINS MET HER AND EXPOSTULATED. "WHY, MISS SNIPE, YOU REALLY ASTONISH ME!" HE DECLARED. "WHAT IS THERE ASTONISHING IN ME, I'D LIKE TO KNOW?" DEMANDED THE OLD GIRL SOURLY. "WHY, YOUR DRESS IS HARDLY THE PROPER THING FOR THE PUBLIC STREET. WHILE IT MIGHT DO FOR THE SEASHORE, IT IS HARDLY RESPECTABLE FOR—"

en pairs of socks and about a dozen collars.

"Here you go, Bing!"

The Chinaman opened his eyes.

Business was booming.

He would have enough to keep him busy two days.

"All light!"

"When can I have 'em?"

"Slursday."

"But don't forget that I brought 'em in to-day, will yer?"

"Nopee, me no floget. You takee tick-ee?"

"Ah, that's all right. I know my things when I see 'em."

"No tickee, no washee," answered Bing, with that same old frozen smile.

Just then in came two more men.

Each had a big bundle of soiled clothes. Bing began to think that he would have to hire some help.

Both men wanted the things right away.

than he could do in a week, working thirty hours a day.

And still it came in.

He couldn't make it out at all.

There wasn't another Chinaman in town.

He knew a lot in the city, but it would take too much time to go after them.

There was one in the next town, five miles off, and he decided to go for him and send for others.

Magnificent air castles began to rear themselves, and he imagined himself a rich man.

If work kept coming in like that, he could go back to China in six months and never do another stroke of work as long as he lived.

Presently in came the old maid of the village.

This was Phoebe Jane Snipe.

She had a temper like the old scratch, and nobody would have married her if she'd been hung with diamonds.

"Me no can do for nossling, lady. Me gottee make a living."

"Yes, but you wash things free to-day, don't you? Your sign says so. I guess I can read."

"Nopee, me no do washee fo' nossling, me gettee money fo' washee."

"Well, I know, but to-day it's different. To-day you wash for nothing."

Sam Bing thought otherwise.

He winked the other eye, and said:

"Nopee, me nevee. Lady tell faily stoly."

Others had come in.

More were coming.

The shop was full already.

It would be jammed directly.

"Well I guess I can read," snapped Miss Snipe. "You ain't a going back on your sign if I know it, and you can sen' for my things right away."

"Me no savvy," said Bing.

Then the others got after him.

"Don't you say you wash for nothing today?"

"Of course you do. Plug Cutt told me all about it."

"You can't put us off with no such yarn as that."

"Just tell us what that sign says, gol-darn ye!"

It was Jim Juggs, the meanest hayseeder in town, that said this.

He snatched the sign out of the window. Then he held it in front of Bing.

The Chinaman was paralyzed.

He could not read English worth mentioning.

Chinese characters were plain enough, however.

Out he flew in a jiffy.

His wife had snatched him baldheaded, once before, for kissing the hired girl.

He couldn't spare any more hair, for he was too stingy mean to buy a wig.

Out he flew in a hurry.

Then Mort got at the rest.

"Say, don't you know there's a fire here?"

Away went all hands as if the sheriff were after them.

Bing's place was cleared in less than no time.

Mort met some of the others on the street.

It didn't take long to hoodoo them.

Then he put a time limit on them.

That is, he made them believe a certain

but Jim Juggs would not, without being made to do so.

Poor Cholley paid for his in time, but he had to put on less style than usual for several weeks and that was a blessing.

Miss Phoebe Jane Snipe, the old maid, was down on that Chinee and called him a swindler.

She made life a burden to him until Mort got up a good one on her.

It was two or three days after the trouble with the Chinaman.

He met her on the street all by her lones.

Two or three passes, a couple of snaps and a stern look fixed her all right.



WIGGINS LEFT THE YARD AND SET OFF DOWN THE STREET. MORT KEPT NOT TOO CLOSE, BUT CLOSE ENOUGH. IN FRONT OF THE CHURCH THEY MET A LOT OF PEOPLE. MOST OF THEM WERE NOT OF WIGGINS' CONGREGATION, BUT MANY WERE. THEY WERE ALL SURPRISED. JUDGE HOLDOVER WAS ONE OF THEM. HE OPENED HIS EYES AND LOOKED SHOCKED.

The sign had some on it, and they read:

"WASHING DONE FREE TO-DAY."

There it was, and he could not deny it.

"Me no makee tickee. me no savvy nossing 'boutee lat," he chirped.

"What's the reason yu don't?" snorted Jim Juggs. "Yu writ the Chinese, didn't ye? Reckon it's the same as t'other. Yu gotter dew my washin' or I'll hosswhip ye!"

There was trouble brewing for the Chinaman.

Just then in came Mort.

He saw that something must be done.

He caught the old maid's eye.

Snap!

She was hooked!

Then he made her do something.

"Why, James Juggs, you dear man, you just my own sweet precious honey bug!"

Then she made a rush for the hayseed. That settled him.

thing for ten minutes, and after that all recollection of the affair would cease.

"Great Scott!" he said, to one or two of them, "do you take your washing to that Chinaman?"

"Why, yes, why not?"

"But don't you know he's got the cholera? What are you thinking of?"

That settled it.

Away they rushed and demanded their clothes back.

When they got them home, they forgot that they had taken them away.

The Chinaman was relieved of the greater part of his extra washing.

Mort did not say a word to Plug Cutt or Cholley Smith.

Neither did he undeceive Jim Juggs.

The result was that Bing washed the stuff belonging to those individuals.

Moreover, he would not let it out of his shop till he was paid for it.

Plug could easily pay for his washing,

"Don't you know it's a terribly hot day, Phoebe Jane?"

"Why, sakes alive, so it is."

It wasn't anything of the sort.

It was delightfully cool.

"Go right home, Phoebe Jane, and get on your bathing suit and umbrella, or you'll melt."

"Why, dear me, so I will."

"And get your market basket, because you're going shopping."

"Why, yes, so I am."

"And forget all about what I've told you in half an hour! Now go, scoot, get out! Fft!"

Away went Phoebe Jane Snipe on a dead run.

She was completely under the spell, and would be for half an hour.

Mort couldn't have done that with everybody.

He had learned just what he could do with some subjects, however.

He couldn't hoodoo the parson or the

judge without being with them right along.

They had stronger minds than Phoebe Jane Snipe, and he had to expend more psychology on them.

Well, away went Phoebe Jane as if she had to catch a train a mile away in about a minute.

A quarter of an hour afterwards she appeared on the street again.

She was a sight.

She had on her last year's bathing dress.

It had been built originally on the Asbury Park plan.

That is to say, it was big enough to fit Phoebe Jane twice over.

But it had shrunk from being laid away without being properly dried.

Now the breeches part was too short, and exposed the old maid's ankles.

The cuffs reached only to the elbows, and the sleeves were tight.

The skirt was short and faded, and wrinkled and spotted with salt water.

Phoebe was really a sight in that thing.

On her head was an old and very big straw hat, tied on with red tape.

She looked worse than a Salvation Army woman.

On her arm was a big market basket.

In the other hand was a red umbrella.

In this guise she started down the main street.

It was not long before she attracted universal attention.

People had always thought she was a bit queer.

Now they were sure of it.

Jim Juggs happened to be in town, selling a lot of garden truck.

When he saw her he let out a regular snort.

"Wall, gosh all potato bugs, ef thot old maid ain't a sight."

Denny Murphy was on the street at the time.

"Oh, glory, wud yez luck at the old woman?" he chuckled. "Faix, it's foolish she is."

Cholley Smith was airing himself on the stoop of the general store when Phoebe Jane hove in sight.

"Bai Jaove, don't you know, if theah isn't Trilby. Faw hevvin's sake, ain't she a sight!"

Phoebe Jane Snipe walked right on, paying no attention to the irreverent remarks of the multitude.

Parson Wiggins met her and expostulated.

"Why, Miss Snipe, you really astonish me," he declared.

"What is there astonishing in me, I'd like to know?" demanded the old girl.

"Why, your dress is hardly the proper thing for the public street. While it might do for the seashore, it is hardly respectable for—"

"Hardly respectable, indeed!" shrieked Phoebe Jane. "I'll let you know, Mr. Wiggins, that I don't dress as gay as some of the women of your congregation, and I don't go to your church anyhow, and I'll trouble you to look after your own flock and let me alone!"

Then she sailed on and went into the store.

"Ah, theah, Trilby!" said the dude.

"I'll Trilby you, you insane idiot!" snorted Miss Snipe, aiming a crack at Cholley with her red umbrella and knocking his straw hat off.

Then she went inside.

There were a dozen or more persons in the store making purchases.

Giggles and snickers and loud laughs went around.

Some were highly amused, but others were disgusted.

The judge's wife was highly scandalized.

Mort's mother thought it was too bad.

The parson's wife thought that some one ought to remonstrate with Miss Snipe.

The storeman was ready to wait on her, but he had to laugh all the same.

Phoebe Jane caught him at it and gave him fits.

"How dare you laugh in my face?" she demanded. "I've a good mind not to trade here another day."

"Why, I wasn't laughing at you, ma'm," said the man, lying like a pirate. "I just had something funny strike me just now and I had to laugh. You see it was this

way." Mr. Juggs had a barrel of cider, and

Just then the time expired.

The spell was over.

Phoebe Jane suddenly caught on to the way she was toggled out.

She blushed redder than her umbrella, let out a yell like a steam whistle and dusted.

"Well, if I ain't getting too absent minded for anything!"

Then she flew out of that store, down the steps and along the street towards home at a record-breaking pace!

PART IV.

THE street was by no means deserted when Phoebe Jane Snipe came flying out of the store.

In fact there were more people around than when she went in.

It doesn't take long for news to travel in a country village.

In a short time it was noised about that the old maid was making a holy show of herself, and that the sight was worth seeing.

Consequently there was a regular gang in front of the store when Miss Snipe appeared.

Up went a shout.

"Here comes the circus!"

"Oh, Sai, ain't she cute?"

"Get on to her bloomers!"

"Where's yer bisickle, old gal?"

Miss Snipe hardly heard these comments and queries.

She got away as fast as she could go.

Cholley Smith got a belt over the jaw with her umbrella.

Plug Cutt had his hat smashed over his eyes with the same weapon.

Jim Juggs' straw hat was sent flying and he got a poke in the ribs.

These three happened to be in the way when the Snipe came out.

The rest, seeing their fate, dusted out.

Away went the old maid on a record-beating trot.

"My sakes, haow she kin run, though!"

"She must be clean crazy, that's what's the matter."

"Hi-ya, old gal gottee bug in she head, she go crazy me tink."

The next time that Phoebe Jane gave Bing any sass, he said:

"Hi, you more bettee go gitee on bathing dless, you lookee heap plenty more bettee dlan wis anysing else, hap."

The old girl let Bing alone after that.

In fact, she remained in the house for three days.

Then she explained that she was absent minded and had forgotten about the bathing dress.

The charitably disposed believed this version.

There were others, however.

These intimated that that cross old maid had wheels in her head, and big ones at that.

However, it did not make much difference with Miss Snipe what folks said.

She generally did as she pleased without reference to the opinions of others.

She heard what they said about her, turned up her nose and went along just as before.

However, she didn't go out on the street in bloomers again.

Moreover, she hadn't so much to say for one while.

In accomplishing that much, Mort was a public benefactor and deserved the thanks of the community.

One day Sunday came along as usual.

It was a lovely day, not too warm and just the day for going to church.

People could wear their best clothes without sweating or creasing them, and the church going crowd was out in full force.

This time Mort thought he would put up a gag on Parson Wiggins.

The latter had been rather intolerant of late, and was getting himself disliked.

He had also been mixing himself up in politics, and was a rank woman suffragist and some of the congregation were kicking.

Judge Holdover was still down on him and went to another church.

All this gave Mort some excuse for working the snap he did.

Wiggins was a champion croquet player, a demon bicyclist, a boss tennis fiend and a great fisherman.

In fact, he often neglected his parishioners to indulge in one or the other of these pastimes.

Consequently, it was not altogether out of the way for Mort Merry to do what he did.

Well, it was Sunday morning.

The country folks were beginning to come in from the backwoods in rigs of every description.

Already the dusty roads and the shady streets were bright with gay parasols, striking toilets, and all the newest fashions.

Ding-dong! went the bells of the two churches facing the public square.

These were the principal ones, and nearly everybody in town went to one or the other of them.

Wiggins bossed the Methodist ranch, and was a shouter from up the creek.

Judge Holdover went to the Presbyterian domicile, just opposite, and declared that it was the only fashionable church in town.

Before he had had his fight with Wiggins, he had said the same thing of the Methodist gospel shop.

It was getting time for the parson to go to church.

His wife had already gone on with the kids.

Then along came Mort.

Wiggins did not live far from the church.

As he came out, Mort waylaid him.

A few quick passes caught the parson's attention.

"You're going fishing," said Mort.

Snap!

A swift folding and unfolding of the fingers.

"Why, yes to be sure. I had forgotten about that."

"And you have not got your worms dug yet?"

"Why, that's a fact, I have not."

"Tell Julius to do it."

Julius Snow was a coon who did odd jobs for Wiggins.

"Julius!"

Out came the coon from the carriage house.

"Yas, Marse Wiggins. Wha' yo' wan' now?"

"Go, dig some worms in a big hurry."

"Why, fo' de lan's sakes, Marse Pa'son, dis am Sunday, an—"

A few passes and a lot of mental telegraphy on Mort's part.

Then Wiggins said what he would not have been guilty of saying in his sane senses.

"Go and dig the worms I tell you and don't have so much to say about it either."

"A'right, I'se gwine."

Away went Julius to dig the worms in a nice place back of the house.

"You haven't got your fishing rod and basket," said Mort.

"Why, that's a fact. I guess I must have forgotten them."

Whish!

A rapid movement of the hands in front of the parson's face.

"Yes, I'll go get them. Come along."

"And your fore and aft cap."

"Why, yes, that's so."

"And your boots! You'll have to do some wading."

"To be sure I will."

Back to the house went Wiggins.

Mort Merry went with him.

It wouldn't do to leave him alone.

The spell might work off.

He must be kept under hypnotic influence all the time.

Mort got in all his fine work in the mesmeric line.

At last the parson came out.

He was a spectacle.

He had on his long black coat and high vest and choker collar, with a white scarf.

Contrasting with these ministerial appurtenances were a fore and aft cap of a decidedly loud plaid, and a pair of ~~shoes~~, waterproof boots.

Over one shoulder was slung a fish basket.

On the other rested a long fishing pole—all ready for casting a line in a brook.

Dong-dong-dong!

The church bells were tolling.

The sexton was putting in a few extra licks at the Methodist house, waiting for Wiggins to come.

A few late stragglers were hurrying to get in before the bell stopped.

The other church began a few minutes later.

They were swell people there and always came late.

"Now then, Julius!"

"Yas, sah!"

"Have you got those worms?"

"Yas, sah, I'se got 'em."

"Fetch them here, you black rascal!"

Up came Julius with a tin box full of worms.

"Fo' goodness sakes, yo' ain' gwine fishin', am yo', Marse Wiggins?"

"Close your face, you black idiot!"

"Why, bress mah haht, Marse Mortimer, yo' isn' gwine ter let him go fishin' on Sunday, is yo'?"

"You slide off on your ear, and have less to say," said Wiggins, taking the box of worms. "Now clear out!"

Julius cleared.

Wiggins left the yard and set off down the street.

Mort kept not too close, but close enough.

In front of the church they met a lot of people.

Most of them were not of Wiggins' congregation, but many were.

They were all surprised.

Judge Holdover was one of them. He opened his eyes and looked shocked. Deacon Shouter had just come out.

He was looking for Wiggins. The parson was late.

Shouter caught sight of him.

It nearly paralyzed him.

"Why, parson, this is Sunday, and—"

Snap!

Whish—whish!

"I know that, but I'm going off fishing!"

"Why, parson!"

"H'm! Just like him!"

"Why, the idea!"

"Yes, sir, I'm going fishing. You can get somebody else to give you a sermon, for I'm off!"

Then away he started down the street. Forty or fifty people saw him.

Several stay-at-homes got onto him and giggled.

"Well, old Wiggins is getting more sensible every day."

Most people were terribly shocked, however.

They asked each other if they knew what the world was coming to.

No one answered the conundrum, though plenty asked it.

Judge Holdover came the nearest to it.

"Well!" he puffed. "This is a pretty way to set an example to the young. Something's bound to come of this."

Away went Wiggins, followed by Mort. The young fellow had attracted no particular attention.

It was quite natural that he should be on the street at the time.

The minister took up all the attention and no one thought of Mort.

He followed Wiggins and presently caught up with him.

By this time the churches and their gangs had been passed.

Wiggins would have been himself again in a few minutes.

It wouldn't do to let that happen yet.

Mort had other plans in view.

It was not very far to the river.

There was good fishing to be had almost anywhere along its banks.

Mort got the parson steered in that direction.

Then he left him and slipped back to church.

Just before he got to the best fishing place Wiggins came out from under the bell Mort had put on him.

He was himself and knew what he was doing.

Suddenly discovering that he was equipped for fishing he looked about him.

"Why, yes, there's Burkett's pool over under," he muttered. "There ought to

be something good to be taken out of that."

It never occurred to him that it was Sunday.

He didn't even stop to think how he happened to have his fishing toggery on.

The enthusiasm of the sportsman simply carried him away.

In five minutes he was fishing away, and getting a bite every time he made a cast.

Sunday never came into his head.

It was simply a case of absent-mindedness, and of accepting the situation as he found it without asking questions.

Meanwhile Shouter had to read an old sermon from some dry old duck or another, and the greater part of the congregation wondered what had become of Wiggins.

The latter fished away for an hour or so, when along came Plug Cutt.

It was nothing new for the tough citizen to go fishing on Sunday.

He went more times than he went to church.

It rather surprised him to see Wiggins there, however.

He had not witnessed the little scene in front of the church.

"Good-mornin', parson," he said. "Havin' good sport?"

"Why, yes, very good," said Wiggins.

He did not fancy the tough as a companion, but he had to treat the man with common politeness.

"Must say I didn't expect to find you here," said Plug, taking his rod apart.

"No?" inquiringly.

"Well, no."

No one said anything for a few moments.

Then Plug returned to the subject.

He was bound to find out what the trouble was if it cost a leg.

"Any trouble at the church, sir? Ain't been fired, eh?"

"Fired, Mr. Cutt?"

"Yes, bounced out of a job."

"Really, Mr. Cutt, I—"

"They haven't hired another minister, have they?"

"Who is that, Mr. Cutt?"

"Why, your folks, the Methodists."

"Hired another minister? No, indeed."

Cutt kept still for a few minutes, till he hauled in a fish.

"Sick, are you?" he asked.

"I? No, indeed!"

"In need of rest, perhaps?"

"Why, no; I don't know that—"

"Changed your views, perhaps?"

"H'm! in what respect, Mr. Cutt?"

Wiggins was playing with a fine, fat fish at that moment.

He expected to land him before a great while.

"Why, as regards Sunday fishing, of course. I suppose you know it's Sunday, don't you?"

Wiggins dropped his pole as if it were red hot.

That fish got a first class surprise party.

"Sunday!" gasped the parson.

"Sure! That's what surprised me."

"Why, bless my soul! I must have forgotten all about it."

It did not take long to haul in the line, take the rod apart and do it up.

"You're sure it's Sunday, Mr. Cutt?"

"Certainly, sure as preaching."

"Preaching!" echoed Wiggins, and then he got out his watch.

It was nearly twelve o'clock.

"My soul and body! Why, I ought to be preaching now!" he gasped.

There was a witness to the parson's Sabbath breaking other than Plug.

This was Jim Juggs, the meanest man in town.

He went to church now and then, but he didn't hire a pew, because he thought it cost too much.

Then he always slipped out just before the collection, which came after the sermon.

That made him miss the benediction, and he needed it bad enough.

By this means he often managed to hear a good sermon without paying a cent.

This morning he had been disappointed.

The sermon that Shouter read, was in a book he had borrowed and had read.

Therefore, he considered himself swindled, and had gone out earlier than usual.

He was driving along the road toward home, when he saw Wiggins fishing.

He had sharp eyes and could not mistake the man.

"Huh! Thet's a poaty caper," he snorted. "Thet's why we got a second hand sermon this mornin', hey? Poaty pass things has come tu, when the minister goes fishin' on Sunday."

Then he drove on.

Wiggins got out of that as fast as he could.

He couldn't get home without being seen.

Jim Juggs had met some people going into town, and had told them all about seeing Wiggins fishing.

Thus the news got to town before the parson did.

He met a lot of his congregation on the road.

Some passed him without a nod and some giggled.

"Had poaty good sport, did you, domine?" chuckled one.

"Don't mention it, sir," gasped Wiggins. "I was never so mortified in my life when I found out what day it was."

That explanation would go down with some.

This fellow had not heard the parson's declaration in front of the church.

Those who had done so would want a good deal of persuasion before swallowing that absent-minded story.

Mrs. Wiggins met her husband when he came in.

"Well, of all the crazy things, William, this is the craziest. Why, we'll have to move."

"But, my dear, it must have slipped my mind entirely that it was Sunday."

"But, good grief, William, you were all ready when I went out, and the bells were ringing."

"Why, is that so? Really, you—"

"And didn't you tell Deacon Shouter and a dozen others that you were going fishing, and that if anyone wanted to preach, he was welcome to do so?"

"Of course I didn't!" said Wiggins, most decidedly.

He was positive that he had not said anything of the kind.

"But they all said you did say it, and Judge Holdover says so too."

That settled it.

"H'm! Holdover says so, does he? Well, I have not much regard for his opinion. Really, my dear, the judge does not seem to have the slightest regard for the truth of late. If he says I said that I am confident I did not."

After all no great harm came of the affair.

Most of the congregation regarded it as a good joke on the parson and had no end of fun over it.

Others accepted the parson's version and forgot all about it.

Wiggins denied so earnestly what he was alleged to have said that Shouter and the rest actually had to back down.

The parson preached as usual in the afternoon and at night, and the matter was dropped.

Old Holdover swore up and down that he would get Wiggins out of the church, and he meant it.

Mort Merry heard it and tickled himself under the fifth rib when he did.

"He's a pretty example of toleration and kindness to his neighbor," chuckled Mort. "For all the good he gets out of going to church, he might a heap sight better go fishing. I'll salt his legal nibbs before a great while."

Holdover was the same sort of subject that the parson was, though a little more difficult perhaps, on account of his pig-headedness and self-sufficiency.

The following day was a busy day with the judge.

It was the first day of the quarterly session of the district court over which he presided.

There was a lot of cases to be tried and the lawyers wanted to get at them.

There was always more to be done on the first day than after things had got themselves regulated.

Mort knew all about the session of the court.

He knew that Holdover would be more

pompous and unbearable than ever, while the court lasted.

Consequently he made up his mind, when Monday came, to soak the old fossil.

He was up at the house when the judge came out.

In a twinkling he had caught his eye.

"Hallo, old sport. Right up to date, ain't you?"

A little monkey business with the hands.

A couple of winks and a lot of telegraphing.

Snap!

Mort had the judge hard and fast in his grip.

The more Mort worked in his science the better he could do it.

Holdover was ever so much easier to handle now than he had been at first.

Why, that old stuff of a legal luminary was like a big baby now in the hands of the young mesmerist.

Mort had had one fishing racket and he thought the public could stand another.

So he looked severe, flashed a stern glance at Holdover, and said:

"Come! You're going fishing. Go get on your togs!"

All thought of his duty on the bench vanished from Holdover's mind upon the instant.

In front of this was a horizontal bar with rings in it for hitching horses.

Holdover leaned against this and put his rod together.

Then he stuck it out over the road as if it were a river.

Along came Wiggins.

He saw the judge and sniffed.

"H'm, I never did anything so foolish."

Then up came Denny Murphy.

"Arrah, judge, phwat's the mather wid yez?" he asked.

"Go away, you flannel mouth; don't you see I'm fishing?"

Mort made the judge say that but Holdover knew nothing about it.



DOWN THE STREET HE WALKED TILL HE REACHED THE STORE. IN FRONT OF THIS WAS A HORIZONTAL BAR WITH RINGS IN IT FOR HITCHING HORSES. HOLDOVER LEANED AGAINST THIS AND PUT HIS ROD TOGETHER. THEN HE STUCK IT OUT OVER THE ROAD AS IF IT WERE A RIVER. ALONG CAME WIGGINS. HE SAW THE JUDGE AND SNIFFED. "H'M, I NEVER DID ANYTHING SO FOOLISH."

Trilby was nowhere alongside the judge now.

He was mesmerized as pretty as you ever saw.

"Now then, Holdover, old sport, what do you say to a little fishing?"

"Suits me to a dot, old man."

"I'm Daniel Webster, you know, don't you?"

"Sure. You're a pretty good lawyer, Dan, but not up to me."

"Well, Judge, we're going fishing."

"Right you are, Daniel."

"Yes, sir, and the parson's fishing snap won't be a marker to this one, judge."

"I believe you, my boy."

Away he went into the house and fixed himself up.

He was a dizzy-looking fisherman when he came out.

First he wore a plug hat, which is hardly the proper headgear for a fisherman.

Then he had a velveteen jacket, a pair of leggings and tennis shoes.

He had a fishing basket slung over his shoulder and a rod in his hand.

When he came out upon the street half a dozen people saw him and wondered.

They knew he had to preside in court, and were surprised at his going fishing.

Mort got his eye on him, did a little Svengali business and had him dead to rights.

"Come along, you old duffer, and do your act," he said.

Nobody heard him except the judge, and he obeyed like a major.

Down the street he walked till he reached the store.

"But, sure, yez have to hold coort this minyute."

"Go away, you tarrier, and don't scare the fishes!"

"Oh, glory, wud yez luck at that, neow? Sure, yez can niver catch fishes in the road."

Just then Jim Juggs came driving along.

"Hi! I've got a bite!" cried the judge, yanking up on his rod.

The hook caught in the hayseed's big straw hat and yanked it off his head.

"Good gosh! What are yew dewin' on gol durn ye?" snorted Jim.

It was a mercy that the hook had not caught him in the nose.

"I tell you, that was a big sunfish. I chuckled the judge.

"Consarn yure pictur, jest yew give my hat!"

"Shut up, Jim, or you'll give away a kee-fish."

A crowd had begun to collect.

PART V.

MORT had got the judge hoodooed for a cold certainty.

He could do just anything he wanted with him.

They couldn't tell what to make of the judge.

The latter chucked the hayseed's hat in the road, and threw out his line again.

"Now, wait till you see me pull in a soaker!"

Deacon Shouter pushed his way through the crowd, and said :

"Fur mercy sakes, judge, what air you doing? Don't you know it's—"

"Fishing, you old fool! Did you think I was cutting grass? Why don't you use your eyes?"

"But sakes alive, there ain't no fish in the rуд, judge."

"Who said there was, you old guy? Well, you must have been loading up on

"Stop slapping about so, confound you!" Then he opened his basket and dropped in his supposed fish, closing the lid in a hurry.

"Mama! but that was an old lunger!"

Those on the edge of the crowd actually thought he had put something in the basket.

He hadn't, but he thought he had.

"Now wait till you ducks see me fetch up another."

Out over the road went the pole, the line trailing in the dust.

Up came another lawyer or two.

"Judge, you are wanted at—"

"Hush up, you chumps! Do you want

"Durned if he ain't, the crazy coot."

"Look out!" yelled Holdover.

He suddenly jumped back.

Half a dozen fellows were upset.

Holdover was terribly excited.

He began pulling in his line hand over fist at a tremendous rate.

"Get out of my way, you gillies! How do you expect me to land my fish if you bother me like that?"

The judge did have something on his hook.

It was not a fish.

An inquiring duck had come waddling across the road just before that.

It saw the hook and made a grab for it.



ON HER ARM WAS A BIG MARKET BASKET. WHEN THE MERRY FAMILY SAW HER THEY JUST GASPED. "GREAT SCOTT! ROSIE, WHAT AILS YOU?" "FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, DO TAKE OFF THOSE CLOTHES!" "MY LAND! I SHOULD THINK YOU'D ROAST!" "GOOD GRIEF! GIVE ME ANOTHER FAN!" "GOLLY, TAKE HER OUT!" MORT DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING.

cider, not to know the road from the Well, for pity's sake!" Reckon that's what's the matter with lover himself!" Cut made that remark. got a laugh. Up came one of the boss lawyers of place. Bless my heart, your honor, what are you doing?" Fishing, you idiot. Do I look as if I was cutting cabbages?" Yes, but we're waiting for you in the court—" Up came the line in a jiffy. Back jumped the lawyer in less time than that. He had no desire to be hooked. I tell you, that was a la-la!" said the ge. When he proceeded to take an imaginary off the hook. Keep still, you mud snoot," he jawed.

to scare away all the fish within three miles?"

"But, good fathers, Judge, the court is—"

"Shut up, you yaps, you make too much noise."

"Yes, but what are you doing?"

"Fishing, of course. Do I look as if I were sawing wood?"

"Fishing in the dust?"

"Wall, I vow!"

"He's clear off his perch."

"By gum, he's got 'em wuss'n the person had 'em."

"Wall, yes, 'cause Wiggins did go fishin' fur a fack."

"Reckon he won't get no fish if he stan's there fur forty years."

It was the universal opinion that Holdover was cracked.

No sane man would do what he was doing.

"He's crazy as a loon, blest if he ain't."

"Lord! he's as mad as a March hare."

Just then Mort made Holdover believe that he had hooked a monster pickerel.

The judge hauled in on the line like a major.

Squawk—squawk!

"Wall, if that don't beat all!"

Quack—quack—squawk!

That duck was awfully rattled.

The way she squawked was something awful.

The spectators just howled.

So did half the dogs in the village.

A lot of them came tearing across the road to see what the trouble was.

An Irish lady on the other side owned that duck.

She was speedily attracted by its melodious warblings.

Over the road she came, as mad as hops.

"An' phwat ther dhivil are yez doin' wid me poulhtry, I'd like to know?"

The judge had got the duck to the rail by that time.

"I tell you, now isn't that a beauty?"

Then he clapped the fowl into the basket.

Mrs. Mulligan arrived in time to see him do it.

"Howld an, judge! That's me own duck yez have in the basket."

"Duck nothing, you fool! That's a twelve pound pickerel."

"Ye're a liar! It's me own duck, and av yez don't give it up I'll have the lah on yez, judge or no judge, begob!"

Mort tried to mesmerize her and make her think it was a fish.

It was no go.

He simply couldn't do it.

She was too positive or something.

Maybe she was too obstinate.

At any rate, he could make no impression on her.

Thus he tried his hand on the judge again.

"H'm! Might as well try to fish in the City Hall as here," snarled Holdover.

Then he slung his rod over his shoulder and started off.

The crowd followed.

The judge beat them.

They couldn't keep up.

Mort hoodooed a few and they got in the other's way.

Back to the house went the judge, meeting his wife coming out.

Wiggins had told her that her husband was in a very bad way.

He had told the doctor the same thing.

The judge's wife just threw up her hands when she saw him.

"Why, for pity's sake, judge, I do hope and pray that you haven't been carrying on like that! Well, I vow and declare! I just never did see anything like it in all—"

The spell slipped off just then.

Mort had let up on the judge when he started off.

The mesmeric influence would naturally pass off when he was not around, as Holdover was decidedly positive.

And then Mort had let the judge clean out of his thoughts and that helped matters.

Holdover looked at his wife and said:

"What's that? What's the matter with you?"

"You don't mean to tell me that you have been—"

The judge looked at himself and at his trappings.

"H'm, yes. I've been fishing. Wonder what luck I had? I don't seem to—"

Squawk!

"What's that, for heaven's sake."

"Hallo! that's funny."

Then Holdover opened the basket. Out jumped the duck and ran squawking across the road.

"Well, well! What sort of a fish do you call that?"

The judge looked severe, as if pitying the woman's ignorance.

"I don't call it any sort of a fish, Mrs. Holdover. It is a duck."

"But you've been fishing."

"I am perfectly aware of it, Mrs. H., perfectly aware of it. I presume that some of those joking boys put it in my basket."

"But you don't expect to catch fish in the middle of the road, do you?"

"No, Mrs. H., I do not. I am surprised that you ask such a—"

"But that's where you were fishing."

"Nonsense!"

"Of course it's nonsense, and I should really think that you, a judge on the bench, would know better. Why, you must be crazy!"

"Woman, you rave!" said the judge, tranquilly, as he went in.

"I don't do anything of the sort. Everybody in town saw you make a fool of yourself—"

"Who told you that?"

"The Rev. Mr. Wiggins told me first, and then—"

"Ha! Wiggins told you, eh? He's a liar from Awayback. I wouldn't believe him under oath."

"Well, I don't care if you do or not, but the doctor saw you and Mr. Merry and forty others."

"Nonsense, my dear! It isn't possible!"

"Well, look at yourself then. What

sort of a rig is that to go fishing in, and court sitting this morning, too?"

Then the judge made a bolt for his own room.

"Thunder and blazes, I forgot all about court. Christopher Columbus! I must be going crazy. If I drank I might think it was that."

Court was late that morning.

It required all the police force in town to keep order when Holdover arrived.

Notwithstanding his dignified bearing, all hands wanted to giggle when he came in.

The story of his fishing scrape had got all over town.

It got to his own ears before night, and he had nothing more to say about Wiggins.

He simply said that he didn't remember it, and that he must have been temporarily wandering in mind from the effects of overwork.

That last bit tickled some of his hearers immensely.

They had never heard of his overworking himself before.

That was something new.

It was the general impression that Holdover was the laziest old duffer within forty miles.

It was some time before the people got over laughing at him.

The fun of it was that Mort was never suspected.

Most people in town would have ridiculed the very notion of mesmerism, and some would have declared that such a thing was impossible.

They would have been hoodooed themselves more easily than any.

Meanwhile young Merry went on having fun and never letting on how he did it.

One day Joe West came along with a full temper and a half a jag.

Joe was a big fellow and a fighter when he was more or less under the influence.

Mort met him swaggering along the street and passed the time of day with him.

Joe was not in a pleasant frame of mind however.

"Tain't a good day!" he growled. "Say it is and I'll lick you."

Mort only laughed.

"You can't do it," he said.

"Can't?"

"No!"

"We'll see if I can't!"

Then Mort shut and opened his hand three or four times in rapid succession, and seemed to be throwing something at Joe.

"Bet you can't raise your hand above your waist, Joe."

The big fellow tried to haul off and hit Mort.

He couldn't get his hand up.

Mort flirted some more imaginary dust in his eyes.

"Bet you can't move, Joe!"

"Can't I?"

"No!"

"What's the reason I—"

Then he stopped short.

It was as if he were stuck fast to the ground.

"What's the matter with—"

"Shut up, Joe!"

"What's that, you—"

"Shut up, I tell you. Don't say another word!"

Joe opened his mouth but he didn't say anything.

He couldn't.

He made some awful faces, but he couldn't get out a word.

Then Mort snapped his fingers a couple of times.

"All right, Joe, wake up, get a move on you, say something. All right!"

The big fellow shook himself, looked at Mort and muttered:

"What the deuce is the matter with me? Am I paralyzed?"

"Guess so. You think you're a fighter, don't you, Joe?"

"Well, so I am."

"You are?" with a laugh.

"Yes, I am. I can lick anything in this town."

"No, you can't."

"Well, I say I can, and I'll lick you if you say I can't."

"Rats! Hallo, Johnny Green!"
Johnny Green was a little fellow about twelve years old.

Mort saw him coming down the street and hailed him.

"What you want?" asked the boy, coming up.

Mort got his eye, waved his hands swiftly in front of his face and said:

"You can lick Joe West and you've got to do it."

Whish!

Snap!

"Why, of course I can lick him," and Johnny doubled up his fists!

The big fellow just roared.

"Why, I'd chew that little fellow up in one round," he chuckled.

"Try it!" said Mort, fixing Joe. "You can't do it, you're as weak as a rag, you can't fight a little bit. Go for him, Johnny!"

The small boy went for the big man, hammer and tongs.

Of course a crowd collected.

Anything in the nature of a fight interested them.

"Go in, young Corbett, you can lick him," said Mort.

Johnny Green pasted the big fellow on the nose.

The crowd applauded.

"Huh, I wouldn't stand that!"

"Guess he's on'y playin'!"

"Soak him again, little fellow."

Joe put up his fists but Johnny got under his guard and soaked him in the jaw.

Joe tried to hit him but struck wild.

"Give him another, Johnny! Send him to grass!"

The little fellow flew at the big one like a bull at a fence.

"Now, then, knock him off his pins!"

Joe got a crack on the point of the jaw that you could hear a long way.

"That settles you, Joe!"

Biff!

Plunk!

Down went Joe West flat on his back. The hayseeds were puzzled.

Jim Juggs was among 'em.

"Wall, I swum, I cal'fied as haow Joe West could daown any one. H'm! he don't amaount tu nawthin'!"

"Get up, Joe!"

Joe got up and squared off at his small opponent.

Mort snapped a lot of psychic force at him and said:

"Go in and lick him, Johnny. You ain't half fighting."

Johnny was just hard and fast in Mort's power.

He did not know what he was doing any more than nothing.

Mort simply made him use all his strength while he made Joe as weak as a kitten.

The result was what might have been expected.

"Knock him out, Johnny."

Then as the bantam struck at Joe, Mort threw the latter in a trance.

Over he went, clean knocked out, and never moved.

"All right, Johnny, you're all right. Clear out!"

Away went Johnny on his errand just as before, and never knew what had happened.

"Get up, Joe! All right, get up!"

"H'm! Yer ain't no account, at all!" sneered Jim Juggs. "I c'd lick yer myself."

Joe got on his feet, rubbed his eyes and glared about.

"What you say, Jim Juggs?"

"I said I c'd lick ye and so I can."

"Bet you a gallon o' cider you can't!" Jim couldn't draw out now, but he expected to lick Joe easily.

The fun was not over yet by a large majority.

PART VI.

JIM JUGGS, the meanest man in town, was confident that he could lick Joe West.

Plug Cutt put up five dollars on him against some other sport.

Mort didn't stop to see the fight.

He didn't do a thing to Jim Juggs nor Joe either, for that matter.

There wasn't any doubt in his mind as to how the fight would end.

Joe would simply clean the street with Jim.

That is, provided the police did not interfere.

Well, the fight started.

Jim swung his arms around like a windmill in a gale and went at Joe.

Joe caught him one under the chin and sent him to grass.

"Here, that ain't fare, no one hollered time," said Jim.

Then he got up again.

"Time!" called somebody.

"Then that hayseed went for Joe again. Somehow he was up against Joe's fist and saw stars.

"Hey, that ain't square! Yew can't take brass knuckles," he sputtered.

"Ain't got no brass knuckles; just got my fists," said Joe.

Then Jim got at it again.

He hated to give up when he was so sure of winning.

It didn't go that way, however.

He wasn't in the fight.

Joe West just proceeded to wipe up the dust with him.

Then along came one of the village coppers.

The hayseed wanted Joe West arrested for licking him.

"All right," said the copper, "but I'll have to lock you up, too, for a witness."

That changed the complexion of things.

Then Jim suddenly remembered that he had an engagement at the other end of town.

He jumped into his wagon and drove away like mad.

"H'm!" said Plug Cutt. "I didn't get my five dollars!"

"Guess you won't get it, neither," laughed Joe.

"Guess you was bluffin' when you let Johnny Green lick you, wasn't you, Joe?"

"When I did what? Let young Green lick me? I never did."

"Well, he surely couldn't lick you for fair?"

"H'm! I guess not."

"Well, but he did."

"When did he?"

"Just now."

"Oh, go on!"

"But I say he did!"

"What are you giving us?"

"A dozen of us saw it."

"Saw Johnny Green lick me?"

"Yes, saw Johnny Green lick you. That is what I said."

"Then you must have seen what never happened, and I'll tell you why—cause it couldn't."

"You get Johnny Green and ask him."

"All right."

Johnny Green came along in a few minutes and Plug questioned him.

"Didn't I lick Joe just now?" he repeated.

"Oh, yes, of course," with a wink; "I'm just that sort."

"There! Didn't I tell you?" said Plug.

"Oh, what's eatin' you?" asked the boy.

"Me lick Joe West? You must be looney. You put me in mind of the minister, you do—you're so different. You're a dandy liar, you are."

"But I say I saw you lick him, and now you're afraid to own up."

Now Johnny Green had no recollection of that little affair with Joe.

He had been hypnotized, and simply didn't remember a thing about it.

"Yes, I did, a fat lot!" he sneered. "I look like it, don't I? Go tell that to somebody what's greener'n me, young feller."

Then master Johnny Green walked off with a look of contempt on his small mug, and Plug Cutt had to give up his case.

One day a week or so after this it came on hot, very hot, in fact.

The mercury went climbing away up among the nineties and threatened to boil over.

There wasn't any breeze to speak of and people were just melted.

The ice cream and soda water places didn't do any business, because it was too blisteringly hot for people to go out.

Everybody remained in doors unless they were obliged to be on the street, and it was an almost deserted village.

At Mort's house all hands did their best to keep cool.

The old gentleman sat in his shirt and

trousers, a fan in his hand and a wet towel on top of his head.

Mort's mother sat by an open window with the awning down, in a loose wrapper and waving a big fan.

Mort's little brother sat in a steamer chair in his night shirt, and the two girls had fans and home-made ice cream and lemonade to keep cool with.

Mort himself wasn't greatly troubled with the heat.

He could generally manage to keep cool, however.

In a white flannel coat and trousers, sash belt, tennis shoes and straw hat, he got along without turning a hair.

During the afternoon when it was at the hottest, and everybody else doing his best to keep cool, he strolled down into the kitchen.

You would hardly suppose a hot kitchen on an August afternoon to be exactly the place one would want to frequent.

Mort went there for scientific purposes and incidentally a little fun.

He found Rosanna Appletart, the colored genius of the place sweating like a bullock.

She was fairly roasting, although coons are said to like the heat.

It was too much for Rosie, however.

She sat by an open window fanning herself for all she was worth, the perspiration standing out upon her black face in great drops and running in rivers down her fat cheeks.

"Hello, Rosie, pretty cold to-day, isn't it?" asked Mort when he came in.

"Huh! wha' yer wanter say sich a ting lak dat fur, Marse Mo'timer?" snorted Rosie.

"But don't you feel cold?"

"Deed I doesn't an' I jus' wondah at yo' askin' me sich a —wooh-oh! Sakes alibe shet dat do', chile!"

"Getting colder, isn't it, Rosie?"

Then Rosie began to shiver.

"Mah goodness, it do beat all how ca'less some folks is. Dat man done let de fiah go clean out."

"And you've got to go to market, too, you know, Rosie."

"Goodness me, so I hab."

"And it's awful cold."

"Dat's a fac'. It am mis'ably col'!"

"And the road is full of snow besides."

"Deed it am, hon'. De drift's am up to de top ob de fences, I reckon."

"Why don't you put on more clothes, Rosie? You'll freeze."

"Burr—urr, wooh! Bress mah haht, I'se got on everything I c'n spar' now, hon. Jerushy! but ain't it col'?"

Then Rosie shivered and shook in the most natural way in the world.

She actually thought that it was the coldest day of the year instead of the hottest.

Mort had got that idea in her head with very little trouble.

All it required was a few passes, a little will power, a stare or two and it was done.

"Sakes alibe, Marse Mo'timer, I cyant neber go out a day lak dis. I'se done freeze mahse' befo' I go free steps."

"Oh, but you've got to go to market, Rosie. Put on lots of good warm things and you'll be all right."

Rosie shivered and sneezed, and then went to her boudoir to get ready to go out.

Mort told her what to get, and thoroughly impressed on her mind what she was to do next.

Then he went to the sitting room where the rest of the family sat, doing its best to keep cool.

In a few minutes in walked Rosie.

To look at her you would never suppose that it was upwards of ninety in the shade.

First she had on a sack trimmed with fur at the collar and cuffs, and around the bottom.

Then she wore a fur trimmed hood, and had a muffler tied around her throat.

Next she wore woolen mittens and big felt galoshes.

As if that wasn't enough, she had on two dresses and an extra pair of stockings tied on with strings.

She was all bundled up, and even she shivered when she caught Mort's eye.

On her arm was a big market basket.

When the Merry family saw her they just gasped.

"Great Scott! Rosie, what ails you?"

"For heaven's sake, do take off those clothes!"

"My land! I should think you'd roast!"

"Good grief! give me another fan!"

"Golly, take her out!"

Mort didn't say anything.

He just looked at the cook.

"Why, Rosie, what's the matter?" asked Mrs. Merry.

"Ain' nuffin' de mattah, Mis' Merry, 'cept I gotter go ter market, an' yo' don'spect I'se gwine out a col' day lak dis wif-out bein' prepared, does yo'?"

"A cold day like this!" screamed Mrs. Merry.

"M-m! Don' yo' tink I'se gotter look out fo' mahse'?"

"Why, of course, but—"

"Don' yo' know eve'yting is done frizz up?"

Mort's father fanned himself vigorously.

"Don' yo' know de snow am drabin' 'cross de rud like neber was?"

The girls looked as if they would faint.

"H'm!" snorted Rosie, "yo' specta I'se gwan to go out a freezin' day lak dis an' not go fixed fo' it?"

The small boy seemed ready to slip out of his night shirt.

"Deed, ma'm, I isn' gwine ter catch no death o' danger, I isn', not fo' nobody."

Then the girls had something to say.

"For mercy sake, Rosie, you make me hotter than ever. Do go out!"

"It's enough to make one faint to look at you. Do go and take off that coat."

"Yes, and the muffler."

"And chuck away those gloves."

"And fire those overshoes."

"Great Ceaser! you make me get hotter by the minute."

Rosie sniffed and snorted.

"Don' see wha' ails yo' folks. Does yo' wan' me to catch col'?"

"No, but to-day is not cold."

"Ain't it? Reckon yo' don' know wha' yo' talkin' bout. Dis am de col'est day ob de wintah, shuah?"

Rosie didn't look so in one way.

She was perspiring like a horse.

The very look of all those clothes made the others hot.

They just couldn't stand it.

The little fellow jumped up, ran out and tumbled into the bath tub.

The girls retired to their rooms where they could wear less clothes.

The old gent swallowed a pint of lemonade, and fanned himself like a steam engine.

Mrs. Merry just stretched herself out on a rattan lounge and had to give up.

Mort was the only cool one of the party.

He chuckled, made three or four motions and said:

"Rosie, go get those duds off and be have yourself!"

"A'right, Marse Mo'timer, I'se gwine d'reckly."

Then she went away without saying another word.

Mort went and lay in a hammock out under the trees and proceeded to enjoy himself.

Some time later, Mrs. Merry went into the kitchen.

She found Rosie rather more seasonably attired than before, taking her ease in a big chair.

"Well, I thought you'd change your mind, Rosie."

"Wha' fo' missis?"

"About it's being so cold."

Rosie just stared.

"Col'!" she gasped at length.

"Yes."

"Who say it was col'?"

"You did."

"To-day?"

"Yes, to-day; this afternoon."

"Huh, guess yo's foolin', misses."

"And you had on clothes enough to roast you."

"Me?"

"Yes, of course, you. I'm not talking of any one else."

"I had on close 'nuff ter roas' me?"

"Yes; a fur coat and hood, and gloves, and overshoes, and an extra dress, and a lot—"

"Sakes alibe, misses, don't talk like dat!"

"Yo' makes me 'spiah to tink ob it."

"Yes, and you said it was so cold, and

the snow was so deep, and you had to go to market and must go dressed warm."

"Fo' massy sake, Mis' Merry, how yo' 'magine all dat?"

"I didn't imagine it, it is the truth."

Rosie shook her head.

"Deed ma'am, I dunno wha' de minister say ef he heah yo' spoke lak dat. Don' yo' wan' ter go to heaben, nohow?"

"Of course I do, and I—"

"Yo'll neber get dere ef yo' go tellin' sich whoppers as dem, missy."

"Why, Rosie, we all saw you and it isn't a whopper at ail."

"You'se folks bettah go to church mo', I reckon, an' yo' won' see tings dat neber happen."

"But, Rosie, it did happen, and I was afraid the heat had turned your brain."

"Reckon no ornary hot day turn mah brain, miss. Ef it was col' I might put on all dem tings, but I neber complain ob it bein' too wahm."

"But, Rosie, you certainly did put on all—"

"Ain' no use fo' to argify de ting, Mis' Merry," said Rosie, positively, "case I jus' know I didn' do nuffin' ob de so't, an' no amount ob reasonin' am gwan ter convince me agin my nach'al understandin', nohow."

The lady had to give it up.

She went away, convinced that Rosie

thought she was telling the truth, but that she had been out of her head and hadn't known what she was doing.

"I declare, if it isn't hot enough to turn any one's head," she remarked, as she returned to the cooler regions above.

An hour or two later, when it wasn't so hot, Mort went down into the village.

There were a few people stirring, but not so many.

Mort was comfortable enough, and so he began to look for some fun.

On the long stoop in front of the store sat half a dozen boys.

It was shaded where they sat, and they were making the most of it.

They didn't have on any superfluous clothing, any of them.

The most that any had was shoes and stockings, breeches, shirts and hats.

All had hats, but not all had on shoes and stockings.

Not one of them had on a coat.

That garment was utterly unnecessary in such torrid weather.

Well, they all sat in a row on the top step, trying to keep cool, when Mort came along.

Inside the store the boss and the clerks just loafed, hoping that no customers would come in for an hour.

Across the street, under the trees, were

one or two pedestrians, but they were not hurrying.

Mort ascended a step or two, and fixed his eyes on the boys.

They all began to stare as country boys will.

Then he flirted both hands at them.

They stared harder yet.

Mort seemed to be throwing dirt in their eyes, all the time staring them out of countenance.

"Hi, fellows, the water is bully. Why don't you go in swimming?"

"Gee whiz! that's so."

"Come on! Don't you see me? See what fun I'm having. Come on, off with your clothes and come in."

Enough said.

The kids who wore only trousers and shirt began peeling them off.

Those with shoes kicked them off in a hurry.

The way they got out of their stockings was a caution.

"Come on, Johnny Green, you're undressed first, come on."

The continuation and conclusion of this comic story will be found in THE FIVE CENT COMIC LIBRARY, No. 162, entitled "MORTIMER MERRY; or, THE PRANKS OF A BOY MESMERIST," by Tom Teaser, Part II.

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